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PENSOFT

Noteworthy records of Sunbittern *Eurypyga helias* (Pallas, 1781) (Eurypygiformes, Eurypygidae) and Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus* (Statius Müller, 1776) (Charadriiformes, Recurvirostridae) from the southern Andes of Ecuador

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Abstract
We report the highest and southernmost documented records of 2 species of Ecuadorian birds: Sunbittern *Eurypyga helias* (Pallas, 1781) in the southern end of Podocarpus National Park and Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus* (Statius Müller, 1776) in Yacuri National Park. Considering these and other records, both species might be expanding their ranges into the highlands, but the necessity to fill geographical, morphological, and taxonomic gaps on Ecuadorian birds remains.

Key words
Distribution; *Eurypyga helias*; *Himantopus mexicanus*; Podocarpus National Park; range extension; Yacuri National Park.

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Introduction

Although the geographical distribution of the birds in Ecuador is relatively well known (Ridgely and Greenfield 2001, McMullan and Navarrete 2017, Freile and Restall 2018), to report noteworthy records such as new distributions or range expansions is useful to further understand species distribution (e.g. Freile et al. 2013, Ordóñez-Delgado et al. 2016, 2018).

The Sunbittern *Eurypyga helias* (Pallas, 1781) has 3 subspecies: *E. h. major* Hartlaub, 1844 occurs from Guatemala to western Ecuador; *E. h. helias* (Pallas, 1781) from Venezuela to eastern Ecuador and from the Guianas through Amazonia to eastern Bolivia and central Brazil; and *E. h. meridionalis* Berlepsch & Stolzmann, 1902 is reported in south-central Peru (Thomas and Kirwan 2018), and has a single and recent record in the eastern foothills of the Ecuadorian Andes (Freile et al. 2013).

The Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus* (Statius Müller, 1776) occurs from western and southern USA through Central America and to south-west Peru

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Figure 1. Left: Sunbittern *Eurypyga helias meridionalis* photographed by HC in the Podocarpus National Park. Right: Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus* photographed by JC in the Yacuri National Park.

and north-east Brazil (Pierce et al. 2018). In Ecuador is restricted to coastal plains up to 100 m above sea level (a.s.l.) (Freile and Restall 2018) and a vagrant at 2,210 m (Santander et al. 2011). *Himantopus mexicanus* was formerly considered a subspecies of Old World *H. himantopus*, and many authors continue to treat them as conspecific, whereas others treat the South American *H. melanurus* as a separate species (see Remsen et al. 2018).

Methods

Our opportunistically observations took place during the usual park rangers' patrol in protected areas. The species and subspecies were identified based on Ridgely and Greenfield (2001) and Schulenberg et al. (2010).

Results

***Eurypyga helias* (Pallas, 1781), Sunbittern**
Figure 1

New record. Ecuador: Zamora Chinchipe, on the south-east border of Podocarpus National Park, 1.6 km from San Vicente waterfall (04°30.481′ S, 079°01.019′ W, 1580 m elev.), observed by GRA and HC (Fig. 1), 23 February 2018 and 31 March 2018.

Since 2011, EM has seen it occasionally at the same locality near the south-east border of Podocarpus National Park. Here, the San Vicente river is 5 m wide and surrounded by remnants of native forest admixed with pasturelands.

Identification. The individual had gray upperparts with fine blackish bands, a color pattern typical of the subspecies *Eurypyga helias meridionalis* (Schulenberg et al. 2010). *Eurypyga h. major* also has grayer upperparts but with wider blackish banding, whereas *E. h. helias*, has dusky brown upperparts with buff and blackish banding (Ridgely and Greenfield 2001, Thomas and Kirwan 2018).

***Himantopus mexicanus* (Statius Müller, 1776), Black-necked Stilt**
Figure 1

New record. Ecuador: Loja, on the access road to the Yacuri National Park, at the Bermejo river bridge (04°41.270′ S, 079°26.621′ W, 2,728 m elev.), photographed by JE and JC (Fig. 1), 5 April 2018.

The site is characterized by croplands and shrublands near the road, and native highland vegetation in the farthest zones.

Identification. The individual photographed had slender, thin black bill, was black above and white below, with white forehead and patch above eye, long and reddish legs (Ridgely and Greenfield 2001).

Discussion

The southern limit of *Eurypyga helias major* on the western slopes of Ecuador, where it has been recorded mostly between 500 to 1,500 m a.s.l., lies 154 km from our record. *Eurypyga h. helias* occurs in the lowlands of eastern Ecuador ranging up to 1,000 m a.s.l. (Ridgely and Greenfield 2001) lies 60 km from our record, there are also a few records from 1997 on the Bombuscaro river, in the Podocarpus National Park (Ridgely and Greenfield 2001, eBird 2017), 42 km from our record, these records could be of *E. h. meridionalis* (Ridgely and Greenfield 2001, eBird 2017), but there is no documentation to determine it.

Our record is the second documented record of *E. h. meridionalis* in Ecuador (Fig. 2). Previous record was 513 km away, at San Rafael waterfall, Napo province (Freile et al. 2013), these records could suggest a continuous distribution of *E. h. meridionalis* along the east

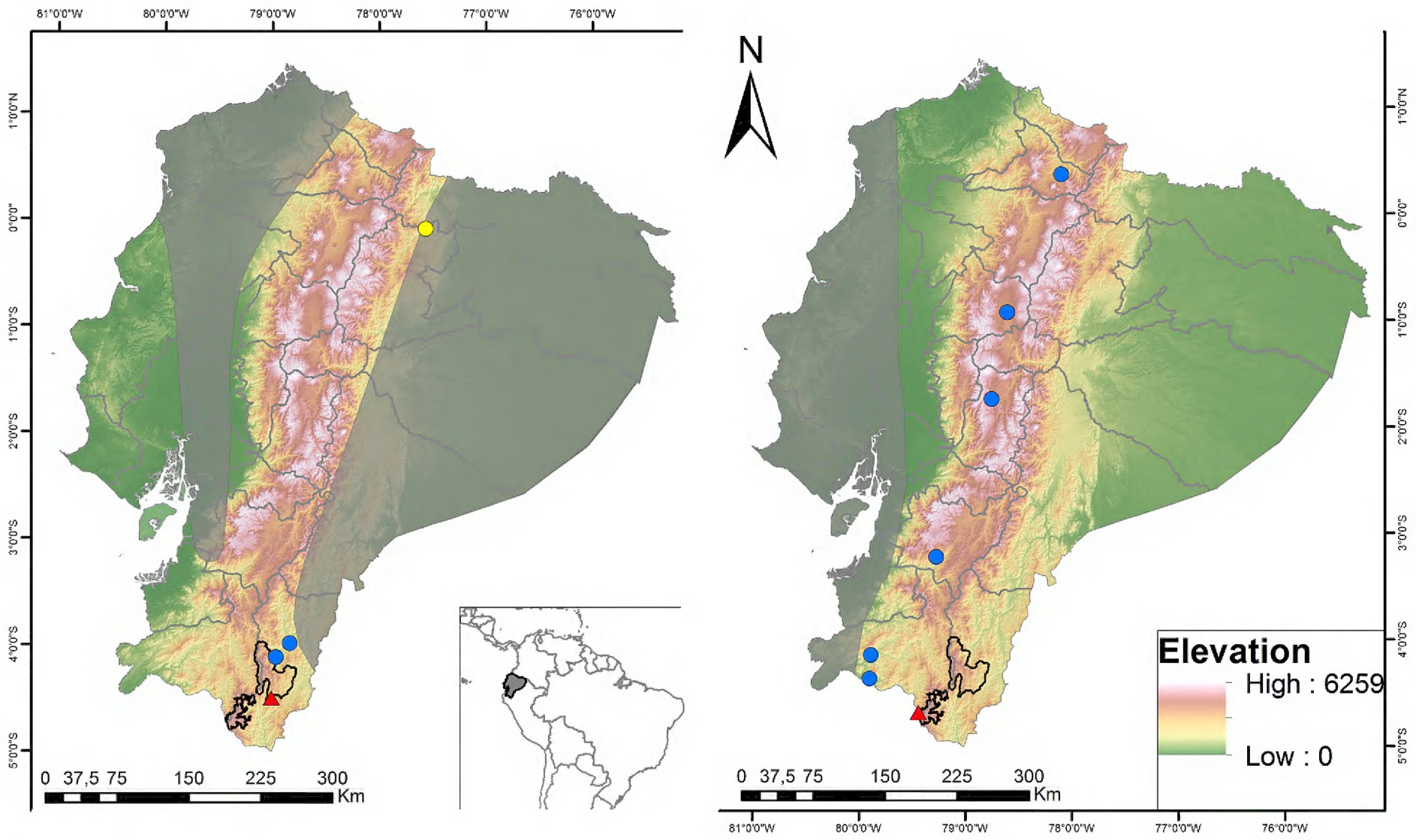

Figure 2. Distribution maps: Left: Sunbittern *Eurypyga helias*. Right: Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus*. Gray shaded polygons indicate distribution areas based on eBird (2014), black solid-line polygons are the borders of Podocarpus (north) and Yacuri (south) National Parks. Blue dots are previous noteworthy records (Santander el al. 2011, eBird 2017), yellow dot is previous record of *E. h. meridionalis* (Freile et al. 2013) and red triangles are our records.

Andean foothills and lower subtropics, however, it is also possible that it is another subspecies, and considering the huge gap (1,200 km to our record) between core distribution of *E. h. meridionalis,* in Cuzco in SC Peru (Schulenberg et al. 2010), a detailed study is needed e.g. comparison with skins and songs.

In Peru *Himantopus mexicanus* occurs on the central altiplano at elevations up to 4,300 m (Schulenberg et al. 2010). Nevertheless, in Ecuador, it occurs primarily in the coastal plains up to 100 m a.s.l. (McMullan and Navarrete 2017). There is a single highland record at 2,210 m a.s.l. at Yahuarcocha Lake, Imbabura province (Santander et al. 2011) and several undocumented records, up to 3,300 m a.s.l. (eBird 2017), of which the nearest record to our record is 88 km to the west (Limón - La Victoria road (04°26.238′ S, 079°48.487′ W, 1,000 m a.s.l.), Fig. 2). The Yahuarcocha record might represent a vagrant, like our record, but the Andes are low in altitude in southern Ecuador, open to the possibility that birds can fly over the mountain range from the coast more easily and frequently than where the mountains are higher.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors made the field data collection, additions and suggestions to the manuscript; HC made identification and validation of recorded species and wrote the draft manuscript; GR made the map and geographic analysis.

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